United	States	Department	of	the	Interior
Nationa	i Park S	ervice			

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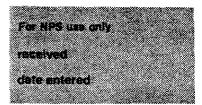
National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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Inventory—Nomi		date entered		
See instructions in How to Complete applications all entries—complete applications.			er 2 - Mar - Miller George Zelde der von der der Vier einhaug	
1. Name				
historia E / D D1				
historic Frank P. Blain	School	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·		
and/or common				
2. Location		· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·		
street & number 2707 Rauschen	bach Avenue		not for publication	
city, town St. Louis	vicinity of	eangreesismal-district		
state Missouri	code 29 county Ci	ty of St. Louis	code 510	
3. Classification		7		
Category Ownership district public X building(s) private structure both object in process being consider x_N/A	X yes: restricted	Present Useagriculturecommercialeducationalentertainmentgovernmentindustrialmilitary	museum park private residence religious scientific transportation X other:Vacant school	
4. Owner of Proj	perty			
	opment Corporation, Richa	rd D. Baron, Presi	dent	
C/O PICCOPHIACK, Ba				
street & number 4615 Linde	ll Boulevard, Suite 500			
city, town St. Louis	vicinity of	state	MO 63108	
5. Location of Lo	egai Descriptio	<u>n</u>		
courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.	St. Louis City Hall			
street & number Tucker	Boulevard at Market Stree	et		
city, town St. Louis		stat e	MO 63103	
	on in Existing S	urvevs	1:0 03:103	
1. Architectural Survey	of St louis			
title Place & Vicinity		rty been determined elig	ilbie? yes no	
date June 1978; revised Ju		federal state		
depository for survey records Land	marks Association of St.	Louis, Inc. 706	Chestnut Street	
city, town St. Louis,		state	MO 63101	

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FRANK P. BLAIR SCHOOL, ST. LOUIS, MO



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Item number 6

Page State

2. Missouri State Historical Survey
July 1982
Historic Preservation Program
Missouri Department of Natural Resources
P. 0. Box 176
Jefferson City,

MO 65102

Item #10 Continued--Geographical Data

Page 1

Verbal boundary description--

650 feet to the intersection of said alley with the east side of N. 22nd Street; thence, turning south, continue approximately 650 feet to the south property line of the property now known as Blair School; thence, turning east, continue approximately 650 feet along said property line to its intersection with the west side of Rauschenbach Avenue; thence, turning north continue approximately 650 feet to point of origin.

Condition excellent good _x_ fair	deteriorated ruins unexposed	Check one unaltered _X_ altered	Check one X original s moved	site date

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

7. Description

The Frank P. Blair School, seen in a current view across St. Louis Place Park (Photo #1), has been a highly visible symbol of public education for nearly one hundred years. Am impressive manifestation of High Victorian architectural style, its twin stair and entrance towers represent a notable 1880s design solution to the dual public school problems of safety and building expansion.

The school was built in three stages (see Site Plan) beginning with the 1882 central twelve-classroom block of three stories with flanking four-story stair towers designed by School Board Architect H. William Kirchner and built at a cost of \$37,856. Kirchner was also architect of the two-story north and south wings which added eight more classrooms in 1888 and cost \$20,494. The \$8,253 third story additions to the wings were built in 1894 from plans still in the Board of Education files (Photo #2) drawn by School Board Architect August H. Kirchner, bringing the total number of rooms to twenty-four. A photograph taken to record the completion of the 1894 addition (Photo #3) shows an iron fence with geometric, humanoid stone posts guarding the school. In the foreground is the fence which once extended around the park.

The recessed stair towers allowed for two exposures for every classroom in the original building and would serve the phased additions. 2 Architect Kirchner took full advantage of the dramatic design possibilities of this functional concern blending a number of historical styles in a typical High Victorian fashion. Particularly imposing are the recessed entrances, each entered under a broad segmental arch of stone and alternating brown and black glazed bricks which springs from massive stone impost blocks. (Photo #4) These rest on capitals of simplified, knobby leaf and frond forms above square columns on high stepped pedestals. The columns are repeated at the entrance wall where the double doors below arched transoms are reached by a flight of ten steps. Above a curiously menancing, massive stone slab (reminiscent of Frank Furness) below the second story sill, the windows are paired below a segmental arch. The light buff, brown and black glazed brick voussoirs and stringcourses contrast with the stone skewbacks which echo the stone impost blocks below and are a use of "constructive coloration". 3 Further enrichment is provided by the layered and corbelled brickwork of the window openings-a treatment accorded virtually all the windows of the school (and better seen in Photograph #5). The third story paired windows of the towers, between stone courses, are topped by a stone lintel.

A photograph of the second and third stories of the central, 1882 building (Photo #5) gives a clearer view of the Italianate elements of the stylistic mix: stilted segmental and flat arched openings, stone brackets (which extend to form keystones of the third story windows) and trim below the stone cornice and truncated, hipped roof. The polychromy of the third-story flat arches and stringcourses is a surprisingly vivid combination of pale blue and black glazed brick. The 1888 and 1894 additions, like the original building,

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Site Plan.)

Item number

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were built above foundations of rough-faced, random-sized limestone. brick, used throughout for the walls, is laid in dark mortar. Although the ornamental program of the three-story walls was continued (without polychromy) on the three bay front elevation of the additions, a corbelled brick cornice was substituted for the elaborate one of stone on the original building. Side elevations are organized into two bays flanking a slightly projecting bay of paired windows below a gable with white-painted coping and paired roundheaded arches. (Photo #1) A view of the rear elevation (Photo #6) reveals the absence of polychromed arches and stringcourses of the 1882 construction. Also seen is the loss of one window bay on the side elevations of the central classroom block by a three-story addition to the stair towers. One-story entrance vestibules now fill the spaces between the classroom blocks. (See

Other alterations include the loss of the corner turrets and roofs of the towers and the bricking in of the fourth story tower windows at the front elevation. Gone also are the copper finials, cresting and cuploa seen in the 1894 drawing (Photo #2). Slate has been replaced on all roofs by asbestos shingles; the majority of the geometrically patterned double-hung windows have been replaced by twelve-over-twelve sash. Most of the basement windows have been completely or partially bricked in and doors at the basement level on the north and south elevations have been added. The windows of the gable at the south elevation are partly bricked in. A modern, less substantial fence replaces the one seen in Photo #2.

The one-story kindergarten built at the rear of the school lot in 1891 was to have cost \$12,000 but architect Louis Kledus was required by the School Board to modify the plans to accommodate an appropriation of only The octagonal building, with three of its sides extended to accomodate entrance and wardrobe vestibules and a stairway to the basement, is built of red brick above a stone basement. A faceted, peaked roof reflects the octagonal plan. (Photo #6) The openings for the paired window openings and doors are segmentally arched with alternating brownish-black and plan red brick with linking stringcourses and stone skewbacks echoing the 1882 main school building. The entrances face 22nd Street and permitted the kindergarteners to enter their school free of harrassment by the older children. The \$1,676 rectangular addition at the east of the building was made in 1894 and followed A. H. Kirchner's plans which called for resetting the windows of three faces of the octagon in the new walls. These windows have stone skewbacks but lack polychromy and linking stringcourses. Later, small, onestory additions (date unknown) at the east elevations of the entrance vestibules (see Site Plan) further obscure the original octagonal plan. These have simple rectangular window openings.

Annual Reports of the School Board beginning in the mid-1870s record the construction of (and occasionally illustrate) other one-story, freestanding kindergarten buildings. None of those illustrated is octagonal.

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A parallel development of the 1870s was the planning of special kindergarten rooms larger than the regular classrooms and often with separate entrances within regular school buildings. Presumably because of economy in land use, heating and maintenance costs plus more convenient supervision, this became the standard solution for the special needs of the kindergarten. (See Section 8.) Of the free-standing, one-story kindergarten buildings for which there is a record of construction, Blair kindergarten is the only one remaining in St. Louis.

Item number 7

Footnotes

Information on cost and dates of construction of the school and kindergarten are from St. Louis Board of Education, Official Proceedings (St. Louis: St. Louis Board of Education, 1882-84).

²The plan of stair towers linking classroom blocks followed a similar plan proposed in 1877 but only partially completed. It reflected a concern for safe, well-lit and adequate stairways, lacking in earlier schools where interior stairs were typically placed opposite a central entrance. Known exceptions were two, small U-shaped branch schools designed in 1875 with two entrances at the interior angles of the "U". St. Louis Board of Education. Annual Report (St. Louis: St. Louis Board of Education, 1875-76), pp. 24 and 56.

³Marcus Whiffen, <u>American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the</u> Styles (Cambridge, MA: The M.I.T. Press, 1969), p. 64. Use of contrasting building materials, especially in voussoirs and stringcourses, was typical of the High Victorian Gothic detailing (which included pointed arches) in vogue in St. Louis school architecture in the 1870s.

⁴Official Proceedings, pp. 406 and 475. Kledus' original plan was apparently the victim of School Board politics discussed in Section 8.

8. Significance

Period prehistoric 1400–1499 1500–1599 1600–1699 1700–1799 1800–1899 1900–	Areas of Significance—C archeology-prehistoric archeology-historic agriculture architecture art commerce communications	community plan conservation economics X education engineering		science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater
Specific dates	1882-1894	Builder/Architect	H. William Kirchner; A	August H. Kirchner;
			louis l	Cledus (kindergarten

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Frank P. Blair School and Kindergarten complex is significant under Criteria for Eligiblity A and C in the areas of architecture, education and nineteenth century acculturation of Germans.

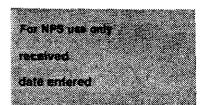
The architecture of the three-story Frank P. Blair School, built in three stages from 1882 through 1894, is a vigorous and well-preserved embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of the High Victorian aesthetic applied to school design. The most elaborate public school remaining in St. Louis of those built in the 1880s, its twin stair and entrance towers were a departure from the traditional St. Louis central entrance plan. The octagonal, one-story, free-standing kindergarten built at the rear of the grade school in 1891 (with an 1894 addition) represents a genre which evolved after the establishment of the first successful public school kindergarten program in 1873. No other surviving example could be located in St. Louis. The early history of Blair School also exemplified both the success of post-Civil War educational policies designed to attract the city's large German population to the public school system and the degree of influence enjoyed by first and second generation German St. Louisans.

Blair School fronts 170 feet on Rauschenbach Avenue, a street which borders the north edge of St. Louis Place Park. (See Site Plan.) Part of the Union Addition of 1850, a multi-block plat filed by the major landowners John O'Fallon and Louis LaBeaume plus six others, the tract (about two miles northwest of the city's riverfront center) was incorporated into the city with the boundary extension of 1855. By 1875, the blocks to the east, north and south of the site were substantially developed but only scattered housing bordered the park which was not improved by the city until the 1870s with an artificial lake and cast iron fountain.

Purchase of the school site was authorized by the School Board on March 28, 1882, after several months of attempts to find a site large enough to accommodate future expansion. Excavation was begun before the end of the month. In June the Board accepted the Teachers' Committee recommendation that the school be named "The Frank P. Blair School" for Francis Preston Blair, Jr. (1821-1875), an outstanding and popular political figure in Missouri during the years preceding the following the Civil War and a Brigadier General in the Union Army.

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The school, finished by the end of August 1882, was the grand finale of the School Board Building Committee's annual Field Day of inspection of new school construction. The event was reported by the <u>St. Louis Globe-Democrat</u> in detail. Six carriage loads of Building Committee members, Board officials, architect H. William Kirchner, building contractors and school principals visited south side buildings in the morning, had an "elegant repast" at the restaurant in Forest Park and "enjoyed a liberal outlay of cigars and wine" before proceeding to Blair School on the north side where neighborhood residents had gathered. The <u>Globe</u> called the new school "the pride of the ward" and "in the best style of Architect Kirchner who has had full swing in its construction. . . altogether the building is one of the finest, if not the finest school building in the city." The day ended with a banquet at the house of Albert Bornmueller, the School Board's representative from the 14th Ward and member of the Building Committee.²

Architect Kirchner's "best style" was an amalgam of High Victorian interpretations of historical style, a nonarchaeological eclecticism which evoked the sense of "pastness" which has been called the High Victorian "symbolic ideal". The 1882 building, with six central, three story bays flanked by recessed towers with corner turrets rising a story above the central block, more than met the School Board's preference for architecture "sufficiently imposing to produce the desired influence upon the pupils and the community."⁴

The U. S. Census of 1880 for the 14th Ward showed a population of 20,536 with 5,223 German-born--the largest number of any of the twenty-eight wards. The educational program at Blair when it opened in 1882 with a student body of fifty percent German or German-American included German language instruction. Initiated after the Civil War, German classes had achieved the desired effect of attracting much of the large German population to the public schools and away from the private German schools which began to proliferate in the 1840s and 1850s. Unlike Cincinnati, where German children attended public schools where subject matter was taught half a day in German and half in English, in St. Louis a daily hour of German language instruction was offered in any school where enough parents requested it. By the 1880s, the results for St. Louis were residential and cultural patterns far less segregated than in Cincinnati. In 1880, half of the city's twenty-eight Wards were represented on the St. Louis Board of Education by first and second generation Germans.

Architect H. William Kirchner (1853-1937) was also a resident of the 14th Ward. The son of a German-born doctor, he was born in Baltimore and came to Missouri in the late 1850s. His architectural training was in the office of George I. Barnett where he worked as a draughtsman before opening his own office in 1887. He was appointed School Board Architect in 1881 and 1882 (in a period when the Board Architect was appointed for one-year terms) and for a three-year term in 1886. His younger brother August H. Kirchner joined him as partner in 1884 and served as School Board Architect from 1893 to 1897. Elections for Board Architect mirrored the lively and acrimonious

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contests for the Board itself. In 1883, when neither Kirchner was a candidate, Otto J. Wilhelmi was finally elected on the eleventh ballot. The salary for the Architect was three thousand dollars with the stipulation that the architect take no outside work. The Superintendent received only thirty-six hundred dollars.

William T. Harris, School Superintendent from 1868 to 1880, considered Germans the most "cultured and civilized immigrant that flocks to our shores" and encouraged St. Louis Germans to maintain ethnic ties. 10 His life-long interest in German philosophy and culture led him to defend the twenty-three year "experiment" of gradual assimilation through German curriculum in public schools and to advocate the importance of kindergartens based on the teachings of German educator Friedrick Froebel. After Harris' departure from St. Louis in 1880, neo-Know Nothing challenges to German instruction increased as did "exposes" alleging misuse of funds by the School Board and complaints about better salaries and recruiting of German teachers. 12 A "Reform Board" elected in 1887 was in fact not a reform but rather a successful anti-German coup. The first year the new Board could tinker with the building program was at the conclusion of William Kirchner's three-year term as Architect in 1889. The Board, pleading lack of funds, then abolished the office of Architect but appointed a loosing candidate from earlier years as Superintendent of Construction and Repairs. For new schools, jobs would be farmed out to an assortment of other architects who would receive three percent for design and specifications and two percent for supervising construction. Architects for new schools designed in 1890 include Ramsey, Brown, Baker, Taylor and Furlong. The only non-Anglo name was that of Austrian-born Louis, Kledus, defeated by William Kirchner in the 1882 election for Architect. 13 commissions from the Board were not the most lucrative; in addition to the Blair kindergarten, he designed the Rock Springs kindergarten and "colored" schools #8 and #11.

The Blair kindergarten, an octagon with faceted, peaked roof, evokes the "play" with geometrical blocks which was part of Froebel's curriculum. The single open space of the interior was designed to allow a head teacher and assistants to work with all the children in an informal setting. In spite of (or perhaps because of) the rigorous attention to rigid discipline and attendance in the grade schools, the average pupil remained in the public schools for only three years. The school building itself had become a symbol of Ward success at the School Board, and Superintendent Edward Long wrote: "It is hoped that, in the future, the Board will look more to the size and comfort of the rooms than to the external appearance of the building." Only the little kindergarten buildings, however, offered designers an opportunity to heed Long's admonition. An Examining Board report for School Board expenses ending June 1892, revealed that fees paid for one year to architects totalled almost twenty-one thousand dollars. The School Board promptly revived the

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position of School Architect. August Kirchner was the only candidate in 1898; his salary was set at five thousand dollars. Superintendent Long received forty-five hundred.

Although Blair was filled to overflowing the day it opened (over one thousand students), the School Board elected to open a branch in rented rooms at the other side of the Park until the "Reform Board" finally responded to Long's request by authorizing the addition of 1888. Without his three-year contract in hand, William Kirchner's skillful expansion of his own building would have been highly unlikely. Together, the Kirchner brothers served as School Architect for eleven of the years between 1881 and 1897 when a new charter established a non-partisan School Board election and a new office of Commissioner of School Buildings. A fortuitous choice of site, an original design with possible plans for expansion and the actual expansion undertaken by the Kirchners combined to produce Blair School—a building which can be said to lead most clearly to the work of the first and best Commissioner of School Buildings, William B. Ittner. Although the siting at the edge of a park may not have been a primary consideration when the School Board purchased the lot, the imposing elevation of Blair School foretells Ittner's renowned twentieth century schools set back on generous, park-like lawns.

A monument to Friedrich Schiller was erected in the park in 1898¹⁶ and until the late 1930s, residents in houses surrounding the park were almost exclusively of German extraction. Gradually, the Germans were replaced first by eastern Europeans and then blacks and poor whites. By the early 1970s, City Directories list an alarming number of houses as "vacant". Located only a few blocks north of the country's most infamous housing project—Pruit-Igoe, St. Louis Park Place experienced dramatic and devastating demolition at its borders. The Schiller statue was removed by the city and relocated in a civic plaza downtown in the mid-1970s and the School Board closed Blair School due to reduction in enrollment in 1981. Meanwhile, a handful of determined "urban pioneers" have moved into the immediate neighborhood and dubbed their organization "La Place St. Louis". McCormack, Baron & Associates, developers with several successful adaptive reuse projects to their credit, have acquired the school with plans to convert it to housing. This project could be a model for the city and a milestone in the efforts to save what is left of the near north side.

Footnotes

¹Camille N. Dry and Richard J. Compton, <u>Pictorial St. Louis--1875</u> (St. Louis: n.p., 1875; reprint ed., St. Louis: Harry M. Hagen, 1971), plates 49, 52, 74 and 78.

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²St. Louis Globe-Democrat, 2 September 1882, p. 5.

³Alan Gowans, Images of American Living (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1975), p. 350.

⁴St. Louis Board of Education, <u>Annual Report</u> (St. Louis: St. Louis Board of Education, 1879/80), p. 14.

⁵Audrey Louise Olson, "St. Louis German, 1850-1920: The Nature of an Immigrant Community and Its Relation to the Assimilation Process" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Kansas, 1970), p. 50.

⁶During the 1881/82 school year, 20,317 students attended German classes in fifty-eight district schools. <u>Annual Report</u> (1882/83), p. 106.

⁷William T. Harris, "School, Public," in <u>Old and New St. Louis</u>, ed. James Cox (St. Louis: Central Biographical Publishing Co., 1894), pp. 2015-16.

⁸Polk-Gould Directory Co., <u>Gould's St. Louis City Directory</u> (St. Louis: Polk-Gould Directory Co., 1880), p. 1285.

⁹Kirchner was the only Missourian admitted to the American Institute of Architects in 1883. John Albury Bryan, Missouri's Contribution to American Architecture (St. Louis: St. Louis Architectural Club, 1928), p. 52. Kirchner was Secretary of an apparently prematurely formed St. Louis Chapter of the AIA in 1884 with six members. Deaths of two of the members and general lack of interest apparently caused its demise in 1885; a successful chapter was organized five years later. Notebook, 15 March 1884, 7 October 1885, St. Louis Miscellaneous Collections, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, Missouri.

10 Selwyn K. Troen, The Public and the Schools: Shaping the St. Louis System, 1838-1920 (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1975), p. 63.

landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc., National Register Nomination for Des Peres School, St. Louis, Missouri (St. Louis: Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc., 1980) recounts the history of the kindergarten program in St. Louis, begun at Des Peres School in 1873 under the direction of Susan Blow.

12Blair's first principal, Peter Herzog, exemplifies the "infiltration" of the school system by Germans. An Alsatian who came to St. Louis in 1870, he was first hired by Harris to teach German, then appointed principal of Ashaland and Jackson Schools. He remained at Blair for forty years. He was described as a scholarly, dedicated teacher and administrator, fluent in French, German and Italian, student of literature, philosophy and psychology who spent vacations in Europe studying teaching methods. A friend of Harris,

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he was "identified. . .with every progressive educational measure adopted in St. Louis." St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 9 June 1925.

13Kledus (18?-1897) was trained at the University of Vienna. After coming to St. Louis in 1869, he worked as an architect and engineer for various firms and occasionally out of his own office. He was Commissioner of Public Buildings for the City between 1884 and 1887. According to one source, he was active in the Western Architects Association and the AIA. Practically nothing is known of his work except that he designed three fire houses (razed) and additions to the Alexian Brothers Hospital (also razed). Pen and Sunlight Sketches of St. Louis: The Commercial Gateway to the South (Chicago: Pheonix Publishing Co., [c. 1891-92]), p. 223.

¹⁵Ittner was Commissioner of School Buildings from 1897 to 1910, then School Board Architect. His Tudor and Georgian designs, functional and flexible in their plans, brought him a national reputation and commissions to design schools elsewhere. To his credit are over five hundred schools in twenty-nine states.

¹⁴Annual Report (1882/83), p. 64.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See attached.

10 Coographic	al Data		
10. Geographical Acreage of nominated property less Quadrangle name Granite City UMT References	s than 10 acr	es	Quadrangle scale 1:24,000
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	cated in City		beginning at the southwest corner 1096, continue west approximately
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state	code	county	code
name/titlel) Jane M. Porter, Reorganization Landmarks Association	esearcher & Ca	rolyn Hewes	
Street & Humber	Street, Room	1217	telephone (314) 421-6474
city or town St. Louis			state M0 63101
The evaluated significance of this pro	pperty within the st	ate is:	Officer Certification
665), I hereby nominate this property according to the criteria and procedu	for inclusion in the res set forth by the	e National Regist	storic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89– er and certify that it has been evaluated Service.
Director, Department o State Historic Preserv	f Natural Res	ources and	date
For NPS use only I hereby certify that this propert	y is included in the	- National Regist	er date
Keeper of the National Register Attest: Chief of Registration	र प्रकार		date

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2) James M. Denny, Chief, Nominationa-Survey and State Contact Person Department of Natural Resources Historic Preservation Program P.O. Box 176 Jefferson City, Missouri 65102

August 1982 314/751-4096



N. 22 ND 1891 LOUIS AVENUE 1894 CB1096 1898 1888 1894 1894 1882 2707 RAUSCHENBACH AVE. ST. LOUIS PARK PLACE 1"= 50'- 0" SCHILLER MONUMENT SITE PLAN: BLAIR SCHOOL ST. LOUIS, MO. N. 21 ST

MAP: JULY 1992 BY PAT HAYS BAER

#1 of 6 East (principal) and south elevations. Photographer: Jane M. Porter Date: July 1982 Negative: Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc.

Camera facing northwest.



#2 of 6 East (principal) elevation as drawn by A. H. Kirchner, 1894.

Photocopy from original drawing owned by St. Louis Board of Education by Negative Touch, 1982.

Negative: Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc.

SONT ELEVATION Scale # TR

BLAIR SCHOOL FODITION
A.H. KIRCHNER, ARCHT BA PUB SCHOOLE

#3 of 6 Detail of stair tower and north wing, east elevation.

Photographer: Unknown

Date: c. 1894

Negative: Landmarks Association

of St. Louis, Inc.

From: Original photograph, St. Louis Board of

Education, 1982.

Camera facing northwest.



#4 of 6 Detail of south entrance, east elevation.

Photographer: Jane M. Porter Date: July 1982 Negative: Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc.

Camera facing west.



#5 of 6 Upper two stories, central portion of east elevation. Photographer: Jane M. Porter Date: July 1982 Negative: Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc.

Camera facing west.



#6 of 6 West (rear) elevation of main school building; kindergarten in lefthand, middle ground.

Photographer: Jane M. Porter Date: July 1982 Negative: Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc.

Camera facing northeast.

